

United States District Court - District of Alaska

Media Guide

Introduction

The United States District Court for the District of Alaska has prepared this guide to provide information about the court and to foster cooperation between the court and the media. Reasonable efforts to accommodate the media's needs will be made. It is the court's intention to treat all members of the media equally and fairly and to assure all media representatives the same degree of access.

Building Security

All visitors must pass through and clear a metal detector upon entering the Courthouse. Wireless communication devices such as cell phones and pagers, cameras, tape recorders, knives (including pocket knives), and weapons (including mace) are not allowed in the courtroom. Court security officers lack facilities for storing such items, so they should not be brought to the Courthouse. This topic is more fully addressed in a brochure entitled "A Question of Security" prepared by the United States Marshal.

Anchorage Clerk's Office

The Office of the Clerk of Court is located in Anchorage in room 229. Regular business hours are between 9:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday - Friday, excluding holidays. The office is closed from 12:30 p.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Courthouse Entry and Exit

At the Anchorage Courthouse, members of the media are encouraged to enter and exit the Federal Courthouse at the 7th Ave. and C St. corner of the Building. During high profile trials and hearings, the United States Marshal may establish special entry and exit procedures.

Other Courthouse Locations

The clerk maintains additional offices in the following locations:

Fairbanks

101 12th Ave., Rm 332
Fairbanks, AK 99701
(907) 451-5791

Juneau

709 West 9th Ave., Rm 979
Juneau, AK 99802
(907) 586-7458

Ketchikan

648 Mission St., Rm 507
Ketchikan, AK 99901
(907) 247-7576

Nome

U.S. Courthouse, Front St.
Nome, AK 99762
(907) 443-5216

Courtroom Decorum

The court does not have a formal dress code; however, business attire is strongly suggested. At no time is food or drink allowed in the courtroom. Although most judges allow the use of lap top computers in the courtroom, the courtroom deputy should be notified that such equipment will be utilized. The courtroom deputy in turn will advise the judge, who will make a determination regarding its use. Other types of wireless devices may not be approved for use in the courtroom due to potential interference with courtroom equipment.

Entry Pass - Limited Media Seating During Certain Proceedings

In rare instances, due to limited space, Entry Passes may be required for media seating in the courtroom. The number of seats will be determined on a case-by-case basis by the judge hearing the case and will vary, depending upon the number of parties, lawyers, victims, family members, law enforcement personnel, and witnesses in attendance. A Deputy Marshal will ensure that individuals are seated in appropriate designated areas of the courtroom. Entry Passes will be distributed to members of the media before the scheduled proceeding. If an Entry Pass is required, no one will be allowed in the courtroom without one. An Entry Pass will usually be valid for the entire length of a trial or other proceeding.

Equipment

In accordance with the policy adopted by the Judicial Conference of the United States, cameras and other audio and/or video equipment are not permitted in the Courthouse area occupied by the District Court except for ceremonial proceedings and with prior Court approval. There is no provision for storage of equipment at the Courthouse.

Exhibits

When an exhibit such as a video or audio tape is sought by the media, the request is to be made to the Clerk of Court or a designated liaison who will consult with the judge to determine whether such exhibits may be made available to the media and, if necessary, the manner in which the exhibits will be made available. The media is not to contact the judge's chambers or the courtroom deputy clerk to obtain copies of any exhibits.

File Information

All pending civil and criminal cases may be viewed, at no charge, in the clerk's office. There is a charge for copies, certifications, and exemplifications. Case files and dockets may usually be obtained on the same day as requested unless the requested material is unavailable. The case number will identify the correct Court division in which the file is located and the district judge or magistrate judge before whom the matter is pending. To identify which Court division maintains the case file, refer to the letter preceding the case number as follows:

A=Anchorage, F=Fairbanks, J=Juneau, K=Ketchikan and N=Nome. The letter is followed by a two-digit number indicating the year the case was filed. Following the year is a hyphen and a sequential four-digit case number. The abbreviations CV for Civil and CR for Criminal appear next. This is followed by the initials of the Judge assigned to the case.

For example: A04-0011-CV(JWS) indicates that the case was filed in Anchorage (A), in the year 2004 (04), was the eleventh (11) Civil case (CV) filed that year, and it was assigned to Judge John W. Sedwick (JWS).

Information for a Future Trial or Hearing

One day advance and current day information regarding a trial or hearing is available on the Court's website at <http://www.akd.uscourts.gov>

Local Rules

Members of the media should familiarize themselves with Local Rule 83.3 pertaining to restrictions on broadcasting, televising, and photographing court proceedings. This rule reflects policy set by the Judicial Conference of the United States. The Local Rules are available on the Court's website [<http://www.akd.uscourts.gov>].

Communications with the Court

The Court has designated the Clerk of Court to serve as Press Liaison for disseminating information on scheduling, seating, court procedures, and logistics in a particular case. Should there be a need to contact the court on any issues pertaining to or affecting the media as a whole, please contact the Clerk of Court. No one should telephone a judge's chambers or the courtroom deputy clerk, but should address all questions to the Clerk of Court. The Clerk of Court may designate a specific individual to answer questions regarding a particular case or proceeding.

Copies of Decisions and Orders

Decisions or orders entered by judges will be posted on-line and can be accessed through the court's website [<http://www.akd.uscourts.gov>]. Every effort will be made to ensure that the order is provided in a timely manner in accordance with the judge's instructions. The members of the media should not contact the judge's chambers or the courtroom deputy clerk to obtain a copy of the order.

Sketch Artists

Courtroom artists and others must notify the courtroom deputy clerk in order to obtain judicial approval before sketching is permitted in the courtroom. Sketch artists are prohibited from drawing detailed sketches of jurors.

Transcripts

Transcripts of court proceedings may be ordered at the front counter. There is a charge for all transcripts. The deputy clerk working at the front counter will provide you with a Transcript Request form.

Trial Date and Time

Each judge's calendar may vary; however, trial is generally held Monday through Friday, from 8:30 a.m. to noon and from 1:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. with a 15-minute break during each session. For further information, consult the master calendar on the court's website or the electronic calendar information on the kiosks in the courthouses.

Website

For general information about the District of Alaska, including daily court calendars, directions, and maps to court locations, visit the court's website at <http://www.akd.uscourts.gov>.